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ABSTRACT

In attempting to understand the complexities involved in becoming a true leader and change agent, this paper differentiates between teachers inspiring action and teachers fostering passivity in a world moving toward a value system which upholds the ideals of a global consciousness. A major framework emerging in the 1990s is that of transformational leadership. This form of leadership, an interactive process, raises both the leader (teacher) and subordinates (students) to a higher level of aspiration and commitment to change. Transformational leadership is characterized by three major components: clarity of vision, empowerment of subordinates, and emphasis on change. The process by which interaction creates change momentum in classrooms includes: (1) modeling, the most effective behavior in conveying orientations, values, and attitudes; (2) positive self-perceptions resulting from life-long learning, time alone for self-reflection, positive attitudes toward transitions, and ongoing assessment of skills and limitations; (3) collective leadership, affirming the concept of empowerment, requiring the ability to listen, support, and challenge; and (4) providing vision, structure, and balance during transitional stages. (LL)

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Meeting Cultural Diversity With Personal Conviction: The Teacher as Change Agent and Transformational Leader

by

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Donna J. Bauman, Ph. D., Ed.D.

A Presentation
for the

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for Teacher Education

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Extending Liberal Arts Strengths to Address
the Changing Role of the Teacher

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Life does not begin with an individual's birth. Rather, thousands of years of accumulated history of civilizations and generations have provided us with a rich heritage. One function of a Liberal Arts Education is to educate individuals to this accumulated wisdom of the ages: the history of humankind, the way humankind communicated their values, their thoughts, and their culture as expressed in literature, art, music, etc.

Two critical aspects of a Liberal Arts Education especially challenge educators in higher education. First, a well balanced curriculum must address not only Western Culture but World Cultures as well. Second, our knowledge and understanding of World Cultures is not static, but ever evolving as a reflection of our ongoing growth and insights.

An additional consideration for Liberal Arts Education, though not directly related to curriculum, is more attitudinal in nature and flows from the above mentioned aspects. Specifically, it is an emphasis on universal rather than national concerns.

In a world that continues to shrink, global concerns of a world community have emerged and have placed provincial

concerns at a lower place of importance. As citizens of the world we share a common environment, rich natural resources and a shared history of humankind on this earth. We are further bonded by communication, literacy, transportation, and technology. Thus, today's world is becoming increasingly interdependent. (Cerena, 1990.) To deny this movement toward universality, solidarity and oneness would be to change the course of what is now a global consciousness.

To transform a value system which upholds the ideals of this global consciousness we must educate for people over machines, for planet over profit, for purpose over power. (Chittister, 1984.) This, of course implies a change in a value system which would decry militarism, nationalism, racism, and sexism.

An inevitable opportunity for transformation of values occurs in the classroom. It was disheartening to read former Education Secretary William Bennet's (1991) address to the Heritage Foundation. Based what he considers parents' expectations to be, he listed the essentials of education as: <u>reading, writing, thinking and math.</u> Further, he implied that the state of American education has deteriorated through the efforts of educators who have attempted to deculturize schooling by emphasizing the need <u>to teach children to get along together in an interdependent society.</u> In presenting his plan in such a way he polarized the basic tenets of education.

We have long believed that one of the primary purposes of education was to pass on the culture of a people to its young. This does not negate the above essentials rather it utilizes these skill to foster growth, understanding and acceptance of both sameness and difference. Few of us would disagree that Bennett's essentials of reading, writing, thinking and math are vital. It is the very mastery of these essentials that provide for equality of opportunity among people. It is also through the mastery of these subjects that a world of different and diverse cultures is opened and presented to our students. However, without conscious self-awareness and acknowledgement of the contribution and richness of cultural diversity, we fall short of preparing students for the inevitability of sharing a common environment, common resources and a future of shared history. Witnessing the current disharmony of the civil wars of Yugoslavia, the riots of L.A., and the discord of the recently disbanded Soviet Union, we are strongly reminded that we must learn to come together in oneness if quality existence is to prevail of our planet. Earlier attempts in our own country to incorporate masses of people of diverse cultural backgrounds into the American culture focused on assimilation which was achieved through a continium. This process moved from ethnocentrism, a belief in personal and cultural superiority: to awareness, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, selective adaption and finally

assimilation. (Pusch, 1979.) It appears that efforts to create a world community must follow the same process.

This is not, and can not be, a one-sided process. Sociologists have attempted to describe what happens when two cultures come into meaningful contact with each other by using the concept of a "Third Culture." Each culture is never quite the same because of the encounter with the other.

As teachers we have the unique opportunity to create an understanding of oneness in our students who will one day become the leaders of the nation and the world. However, before teachers can evoke sweeping changes in others they must first discover who they are, both as individuals and as citizens of the world. They must learn to sense the world around them directly, and contemplate their impressions deeply. When teachers view themselves as <u>leaders and change agents,</u> they realize they must cultivate a strong vision through the awareness of a world that is reaching out for unity and oneness. This vision, when modeled by teachers, not by force but by commitment, can then be shared by those they lead.

Many questions arise in the attempt to understand the complexities involved in becoming a true leader and change agent. What is it that differentiates between a teacher who inspires action and one who fosters passivity? How does one leader encourage independence and self direction while another only creates dependence and lack of confidence?

Attempts to answer these questions have resulted in an abundance of diverse material being written about educational leadership. Major attempts to define leadership usually agree on common elements: leadership is a process, influencing activities of the teacher or the group, aimed toward the achievement of goals.

One of the major leadership frameworks emerging in the nineties is that of transformational leadership. This form of leadership is an interactive process that raises both the leader (teacher) and the subordinates (students) to a higher level of aspiration and commitment to change. Transformational leadership is characterized by three major components: (1) the clarity of vision, (2) the empowerment of subordinates, and (3) the emphasis on change. Some focus is on the leader, although the major focus is on the interactive process between leader and subordinates. The following components of the interactive process are effective means of creating a change momentum in classroom interactions:

1. Studies have found that modeling is the most effective behavior in conveying orientations, values and attitudes. (Bauman, 1988). Bandura (1982) attempted to answer the question of why people do what they do. He demonstrated that the person, the environment, and the person's behavior itself all interact to produce the person's subsequent behavior. He stated that it is a natural tendency for humans to imitate what they see others do. Furthermore, he pointed

out that only what can be observed can be learned. Modeling provides the mirror of a map for the person to use as a guide in developing values and attitudes.

Therefore, the teacher-leader has a tremendous opportunity to model to students behaviors which inspire others to be change agents for a more integrated society.

2. Positive self perceptions, resulting from a composite of lifetime experiences, are strong determinates in the development of the teacher as a transformational leader and effective change agent. However, self perceptions result from an inner dialogue in which the teacher learns to sense the world around and develop an awareness of his relationship to it. Lao Tzu (Wing, 1986) believed that intuitive knowledge was the purest form of knowledge. The process of discovering self, according to Lao Tzu, came from discovering the world directly and contemplating impressions deeply. Four factors contribute to the teacher's self perception. These are life long learning, time alone for self reflection, positive attitudes toward transitions, and ongoing assessment of skills and limitations.

a. life long learning - education, reading personal and professional networks, and mentors are major sources of ongoing growth for teachers. These are sources and means of expanding capacities for self awareness.

b. time alone for self reflection - reflection allows time for the teacher to revitalize self, to develop trust in

one's own self-perceptions, and to integrate beliefs and commitments.

c. positive attitudes toward transitions - even if transitions are negative in nature, they can be looked at as opportunities for growth. Daloz (1986) referred to growth as, "leaping out of the shell," as a means of resolving tensions in self and others. Fitzgerald (1986) determined that female leaders demonstrated strong inner personal strength when they experienced internal conflict, that they have taken charge of their lives, and had never lost sight of their objectives. Keough (1984) and Gibbons (1987) found in separate studies that a major competency in leaders was the ability to stand firm in the face of conflict.

d. ongoing personal assessment - Daloz (1986) confirmed the importance of accurate self appraisal seeing transformation possible only after individuals transcend themselves through the process of having a present sense of where they are and where they can go. Only when the teacher/leader is able to speak confidently of skills and consistently about limitations, can she/he form a sense of self confidence in her/his integrity of power and ability to grow.

3. Collective leadership - Lao Tzu (Wing, 1986) simply affirmed the concept of empowerment or pro-action, when he stated, "in order to remain in front of people, one must put oneself behind them." To remain behind and still lead

requires three qualities in the teacher/leader: to listen, to support, and to challenge. Listening to others allows the teacher/leader to have balance in seeing the whole picture. Daloz (1986) made a distinction between support and challenge by stating that support validates the individual while challenge opens the gap. The combination of support and challenge given by the teacher/leader determines the student's ability to transcend the present self and assume greater responsibility. Teachers can also use listening as an active intervention process. This type of listening results in an emergence of quality in relationships, greater commitment from students and less feelings of isolation, powerlessness and meaninglessness in the group. Teachers empower students by being fair and supportive, by sensitively fitting the right student to the responsibility, by rewarding for excellence, and by being willing to share power.

4. Transformational teacher/leaders identify themselves as change agents. The total transformation process is dependent on the openness of teacher/leaders and students to move through seeming contradictions, to legitimatize tensions, and consequently attend to them. Bridges (1980) stated that the transitional stage, also called the neutral zone, was the critical point for individuals in transforming themselves. Teacher/leaders who identify themselves as change agents provide vision, structure and balance during the transitional stages. There is grave importance in the

change agent providing continuity for students in bridging the past with the present realities and future possibilities.

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